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To the President of the European Parliament
Enrique Baron Crespo
97-113, rue Belliard
B-1040 Bruxelles
Belgium

13 December 1993

Dear Mr. Baron Crespo,

I am writing to express my dismay about a report I recently received. The document, labelled confidential, is a report by James Janssen van Raay on the EPIFA visit to Indonesia. As you know EPIFA is the European Parliament Indonesian Friendship Association and its aims are clearly reflected in the name.

As expressed in the European Parliament on many occasions, human rights violations in the Indonesian archipelago are still very much on the agenda. The Parliament has adopted several resolutions on East Timor and the Parliament's Human Rights Sub-Committee conducted a hearing on human rights abuses in East Timor. Against this background we might have expected a more serious preparation for EPIFA's visit to Indonesia.

I see from the report that the MEPs from EPIFA only met top-ranking Indonesian officials and representatives of business. By contrast with previous visits by MEPs to the region, they appear to have made no attempts to meet representatives of Indonesian non-governmental organisations, in particular in the field of human rights and the environment.

Mr. Janssen van Raay's views on the East Timor issue are publicly known and conform with the official views of the Indonesian government. We also know that, to this day, the international community has not recognised Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. His more than cordial relations with the Indonesian authorities are also well-known. For the record, I would say that it is my understanding that Mr. Janssen van Raay's views do not reflect the views of the majority of MEPs. Although I strongly disapprove of Mr van Raay's views on East Timor, the complaints I wish to raise here are not about East Timor.

There are two disturbing sections of the visit which I feel can only be accounted for by poor preparations for the visit.

On page 4, the report mentions a visit to East Kalimantan where the MEPs were guests of the companies **PT Kalhold Utama**, a plywood and glue factory, and **PT Kiani Hutani Lestari** (wrongly spelled by Mr. Janssen van Raay). These companies are part of the **Kalimanis Group** owned by the timber tycoon Bob Hassan, one of the very few privileged businessmen in Indonesia who can drop in on President Suharto unannounced. In October, a few weeks before the EPIFA visit, a logging company of the **Kalimanis Group** bulldozed at least half of the **Bentian** forest. **Bentian** is the name of an indigenous tribe, one of the many **Dayak** tribes living in Kalimantan. They are shifting cultivators and are one of the very few tribes on this globe who cultivate rattan. Their forest is full of tropical fruit trees and the **Bentian** have been cultivating this forest for at least 150 years. The cultivated rattan estates, fruit trees and ancestral burial grounds have been destroyed on the pretext that the forest is not productive. It is highly likely that the plywood the EPIFA MEPs saw in **PT Kalhold Utama** was plundered from the **Bentian** forest. It is not difficult to imagine what the Dayak people feel about MEPs allowing themselves to be hosted by companies that have devastated their livelihoods.

It is important to note in 1993, the year designated by the UN as the year of the indigenous peoples, that the **Dayak** people are pre-eminent for their management of sustainable forestry, in stark contrast with the practices of timber conglomerates like the **Kalimanis Group**.

Another disturbing thing on page 4 is Mr. Janssen van Raay's comments on transmigration. This widely criticised programme is at the moment being revived by the Indonesian government and one of its aims is to re-settle the many indigenous peoples onto permanent sites. Anthropologists, ethno-botanists, forestry and agricultural experts will confirm that the permanent resettlement of shifting cultivators or forest gatherers is likely to lead to ethnocide or even genocide.

My second complaint concerns page 3 which reports a visit to the office of **ITCI**, the International Timber Cooperation of Indonesia. **ITCI** is fully owned by the Indonesian army and possesses a huge forest concession of 470,000 ha. Realising the dominating role of the military in Indonesian daily life, I would have expected the MEPs to have shown some hesitation at being hosted by an army company. Although the mission leader was probably aware of this, it is very likely that the majority of MEPs on the mission were not aware of it. But as seasoned politicians, they cannot use ignorance of the facts as a valid excuse; they should surely have been more circumspect about the programme and the companies who had agreed to host them.

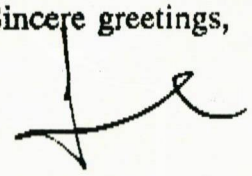
Mr. Janssen van Raay's report gives a very disappointing account of a visit by distinguished members of the European Parliament. I do not know whether other members of the mission have written their own reports or whether Mr van Raay's report represents the mission as a whole. Until I know whether they view their visit to Indonesia in a different light, I can only conclude that the other EPIFA members were ill-informed, ill-prepared and naive.

Finally, may I ask whether the European Parliament has a Code of Conduct about missions undertaken by its members, in particular to ensure that such missions meet a

wide-ranging selection of groups and organisation. If so, I would be grateful to receive a copy. I would also like to know whether my organisation, TAPOL, as an NGO with extensive contacts in Indonesia, can make its views known to members of your Parliament. In particular, is there a forum at the Parliament where we would be able to present our information to MEPs, so as to rectify the one-sided and very damaging picture given in Mr van Raay's report?

Relationships with countries like Indonesia should be seen in their entirety, and should encompass human rights. Although not written under the aegis of the European Parliament, the EPIFA is a blemish to the fine tradition of the European Parliament.

Sincere greetings,



Liem Soei Liong
EDITOR

cc Members of the EPIFA delegation
Members of the Intergroup for East Timor
SOS Timor, CMP and other ngo's.